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SIPDIS
DOL/ILAB FOR TINA MCCARTER
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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ECON](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [SR](#) [MW](#)
SUBJECT: SERBIA: CHILD LABOR INFORMATION FOR TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT
ACT (GSP) 2008 REPORT

REF: 08 State 127448

SUMMARY -----

¶1. Reftel requested post input for Serbia, as a recipient of trade benefits under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) program, on efforts to combat child labor. Serbia is upholding its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. END SUMMARY.

INCIDENTENCE AND NATURE OF CHILD LABOR -----

¶2. Children in the Republic of Serbia can be found working in rural areas, on family farms or in other family businesses. Children also work in the informal sector, selling small items or washing car windows. Children from poor, rural communities, Romani children, and children living with foster families are at the highest risk for entering exploitive child labor, including begging, prostitution, dealing narcotics, and hard physical labor, according to a study released in March 2006 by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and the NGO Children's Rights Center. Internal sex trafficking of girls has been a problem. Children have also been trafficked for purposes of forced labor or street begging. The incidence of trafficking of children for sexual exploitation has reportedly continued to grow, although this may be attributed to increased monitoring and an improvement in victim identification. The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy officially reported no cases of illegal or forced child labor for 2008. The Ministry would not provide information on the number of child labor cases investigated.

Although the government would not say how many inspectors are employed or the nature of their workload, the Ministry did say it had an adequate number of qualified inspectors, but added that inspectors needed better working facilities and equipment to perform their duties. Two labor rights NGOs, Felicitas and the Center for Democracy, also reported no illegal or forced child labor cases in Serbia.

CHILD LABOR LAWS AND ENFORCEMENT -----

¶3. The minimum age for employment is 15 years, and youth under the age of 18 years must have written permission from a parent or guardian to work. However, it is not clear if the minimum age for employment applies to self-employed children. Children under 18 years are prohibited from hazardous work or from working under conditions that might "jeopardize their health, morals and education," including work that involves strenuous physical activity; work underground, underwater, or at dangerous heights; and work with exposure to toxic or carcinogenic substances, extreme temperatures, noise, or vibrations. Further, children under 18 years are not allowed to work overtime hours or at night, and are allowed to work no more than 35 hours per week. The law provides for monetary penalties for violation of these provisions.

¶4. Procurement of a minor for the purpose of prostitution is punishable by up to three years imprisonment. Inducement of a minor into prostitution is punishable by 1 to 10 years imprisonment. The production or distribution of pornographic materials portraying a minor is punishable by 1 to 5 years imprisonment; if the minor is under 14 years old the punishment is a minimum of 3 years imprisonment. Forced labor is prohibited. Males are eligible for conscription into the Armed Forces at 18 years, but can be recruited for voluntary service in the year of their 17th birthday. The trafficking of minors involving force or coercion is punishable by at least five years imprisonment. In 2008, the Government filed 32 criminal charges against 74 persons for trafficking. The Government has a full-time anti-trafficking unit in the organized crime police force and a full-time anti-trafficking office in the border police. A deputy public prosecutor and other officials charged with complicity in trafficking for prostitution in July 2008 were found guilty and received sentences ranging from time served to eight years.

CURRENT GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS TO ELIMINATE THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

¶5. The Ministry of Labor and Social Issues includes child labor prevention in its standard protection programs for children and families. A new department within the Ministry was created in 2007 to address the social problems in the Roma community that lead to forced labor. The department also focuses on improving education and health services.

¶6. The government appointed a new Anti-Trafficking Coordinator to fill a position that had been vacant for a year. The National

Coordinator submitted an anti-trafficking action plan for 2009 to implement the National Strategy to combat trafficking in persons. The Government of Serbia and NGOs continued to raise public awareness of trafficking by holding conferences, broadcasting public service announcements, and sponsoring school outreach programs.

COMMENT

¶7. Serbia has adequate laws that meet international standards to discourage child labor. However, the government needs to be more active and effective in helping the Roma and impoverished children who are most susceptible to exploitation. Serbia continues to work with its neighbors to combat trafficking in persons. END COMMENT

MUNTER